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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 003547

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 11 SHOULD READ PARA 10)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [RS](#) [NATO](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA REACTS TO THE NATO MINISTERIAL

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The reaction by Russian officials to the December 2 NATO Ministerial was largely muted, with the MFA welcoming a "return to realism" as NATO decided to resume a political dialogue with Russia. GOR officials expect NATO to make the first step in reestablishing ties with Russia, arguing the NATO SYG Jaap de Hoop Scheffer should hold more formal meetings with Russia's envoy to NATO Dmitriy Rogozin and find a way to move the relationship forward. MFA officials called NATO's decision to not extend MAP offers to Ukraine and Georgia "predictable," but also expressed concerns that possible future NATO bases in Ukraine and Georgia could be used against Russia. Rogozin argued that the MAP issue exposed splits in NATO, and showed the alliance valued ties with Russia more than with Ukraine and Georgia. Experts agreed, with some arguing that NATO's bigger challenges lie in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Russia's relatively restrained response may also reflect its lack of success in winning more than a polite hearing for Medvedev's European Security Treaty, with NATO remaining the preferred Euro-Atlantic Security architecture. End Summary.

MFA Declares "Return To Realism"

¶2. (U) MFA officials, in a statement issued December 4, welcomed NATO's decision to resume a political dialogue with Russia as a "return to realism." The statement argued that NATO had decided not to cast Russia as the "imaginary threat from the East," and recognized that it was counterproductive to not cooperate on key security issues. The MFA also cast the decision to defer MAP offers to Ukraine and Georgia as a realistic step due to the "risks linked with bringing these countries into the alliance swiftly." The statement argued that cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was possible only in an honest and open atmosphere in which all members jointly sought to find common ground. Russia did not curtail political dialogue in the NRC, and did not want a new Cold War, according to the statement.

Russia Waiting For NATO To Make The First Move

¶3. (C) MFA NATO Section Head Dmitriy Talanov told us December 5 that Russia would not make the first move to reestablish dialogue or seek new areas of cooperation with NATO, though it was open to ideas such as cooperating to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia or finding new ways to jointly stabilize Afghanistan. NATO, however, needed to decide what it truly

wanted regarding Russia, and SYG de Hoop Scheffer should engage in more formal meetings with Rogozin before traveling to Moscow. Talanov added that, until de Hoop Scheffer and Rogozin worked together and found a way forward, Moscow had "absolutely nothing to say to de Hoop Scheffer."

Ukraine And Georgia: Neither Win Nor Loss For Russia

¶4. (C) Talanov described NATO's refusal to grant a MAP offer to Ukraine and Georgia as neither a win nor a loss for Russia, since the two countries had not received MAP offers, but the Alliance had reconfirmed the Bucharest promise of eventual membership. He saw the decisions as a compromise between advocates and opponents of MAP. Talanov, however, criticized proposals that Ukraine and Georgia join NATO without first receiving a MAP offer. He said that NATO had established procedures and should not change the rules without all members agreeing.

MFA Warns Against Future Bases In Ukraine And Georgia

¶5. (C) Talanov also voiced concerns over the possibility of future NATO bases in Ukraine or Georgia. He said that the small bases NATO had in Romania and Bulgaria could be used against Russia in a crisis, and if such bases were built in Ukraine or Georgia, this would be very provocative toward Russia. The U.S. military, he said, "has plans against Russia, and we know it."

Zhirinovskiy As Voice Of Reason...

¶6. (SBU) Prominent politicians largely adhered to the GOR's position and spin, but stopped short of triumphalism. Duma International Relations Committee Chair Konstantin Kosachev applauded the outcome, saying that NATO was a divided alliance and arguing that "dragging Ukraine and Georgia into NATO has always been an exclusively American project." He posited NATO's cautious policy on MAP was a recognition that allowing Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance would aggravate, rather than solve, "most existing problems." Similarly, the usually provocative Duma Deputy Speaker Vladimir Zhirinovskiy issued a rather sober statement, saying that Russia "will never fight NATO," and "will always cooperate and hold debates and discussions." He characterized the decision to resume political contact between Russia and NATO and refuse to offer MAP to Ukraine and Georgia "predictable."

...While Rogozin Gloats

¶7. (U) By contrast, Russia's NATO Envoy Dmitriy Rogozin gloated. He told Vesti TV on December 3 that the failure of NATO to offer MAP to Ukraine and Georgia showed that NATO valued its relations with Russia more than membership for Georgia and Ukraine. He then told Ekho Moskvyy this signified a "defeat" for the regimes in Kyiv and Tbilisi. According to Rogozin, the "plans of those who have always spoken about Russia in icy terms have been destroyed." A split had developed in NATO that would only deepen as NATO tries to further enlarge, he posited. He also disparaged Ukraine, arguing that NATO would not invite such a "bankrupt, scandal-ridden" country to join.

The Experts Argue Over NATO's Future

¶8. (U) Experts have played up European reluctance to extend a MAP offer to Ukraine and Georgia. Aleksandr Khranchikin of the Institute of Military and Political Analysis argued that

Georgia and Ukraine would never become NATO members because Europe did not wish to open up disputes with Russia. Dean of the Higher School of Economics Sergey Karaganov argued that NATO enlargement would destabilize European politics, something European members of NATO wish to avoid. President of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov told Interfax on December 3 that Europe did not want to bear the burden of an unstable Ukraine and Georgia.

¶9. (U) Previewing the NATO ministerial, Editor-In-Chief of Russia In Global Affairs magazine Fedor Lukyanov argued that "NATO's future depends on its ability to become an effective player in South Asia, rather than the speed with which it penetrates post-Soviet space." Afghanistan is NATO's main military conflict, and Pakistan is the crossroads of many problems in the region. In this context, he charged, enlargement was a distraction from the alliance's bigger challenges in South Asia.

Comment

¶10. (C) The relatively muted official response to the Ministerial may also be attributed to the GOR's inability to persuade NATO and Russia's closest "Old Europe" partners that Moscow has a coherent, alternative vision to existing Euro-Atlantic security institutions. While Russia aggressively counters NATO enlargement, its efforts to sell a new European Security Treaty continue to be met with polite skepticism.
BEYRLE